

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, CA
SUBJECT: QUEBEC BACK TO NORMAL FOLLOWING DEMONSTRATIONS
BY CIVIL SERVANTS AND CNTU

REF: QUEBEC 0208

1. STRIKE BY CIVIL SERVANTS OPPOSING BILL 50 CLOSED DOWN MOST GOVERNMENT OFFICES IN QUEBEC CITY JUNE 16. DEMONSTRATION WAS STAGED IN FRONT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUT NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO REPEAT PREVIOUS DAYS BLOCKADE (REFTEL); NATIONAL ASSEMBLY STAFF DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN WALKOUT AND WORK CONTINUED THERE AS USUAL. NOON DEMONSTRATION WAS ATTENDED BY SOME 2500 PEOPLE, SIGNIFICANTLY BELOW THE TURNOUT OF 6-7000 PREDICTED BY CIVIL SERVICE UNION LEADERS. POLICE WERE IN EVIDENCE AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND OTHER GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, BUT THERE WERE NO BARRICADES AND NO INCIDENTS.

2. PQ GOVERNMENT, VISIBLY EMBARRASSED OVER SUCCESS OF DEMONSTRATORS IN BARRING ACCESS TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THE PREVIOUS DAY, WAS DETERMINED NOT TO ALLOW A REPEAT PERFORMANCE. PRIME MINISTER LEVESQUE CONDEMNED DEMONSTRATORS AS "IRRESPONSIBLE ROMANTICS" AND VOWED
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THAT STUDY OF BILL 50 IN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE WOULD CONTINUE UNINTERRUPTED. HE REJECTED A REQUEST BY UNION LEADERS THAT ACTION ON THE BILL BE SUSPENDED, AND REFUSED AN URGENT REQUEST TO MEET WITH THE LEADERS OVER THE WEEKEND. UNION LEADERS FIRST ANNOUNCED THAT STRIKE WOULD CONTINUE AT LEAST THROUGH TODAY (JUNE 19) AND THREATENED "OTHER MEASURES"

FOR LATER THIS WEEK, BUT LATER ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WERE CANCELLING PLANS FOR CONTINUATION OF STRIKE SO THAT MEETING WITH LEVESQUE COULD TAKE PLACE "IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF CALM."

3. A SECOND DEMONSTRATION TOOK PLACE IN FRONT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING FRIDAY EVENING, THIS TIME BY MEMBERS OF CNTU PROTESTING THE JAILING OF FOUR UNION LEADERS IN MONTREAL. GOQ HAD BEEN VERY NERVOUS ABOUT THIS ONE, SINCE CNTU DEMONSTRATORS ARE A FAR TOUGHER PROPOSITION THAN RELATIVELY NONCOMBATIVE CIVIL SERVANTS. RIOT POLICE WERE ON THE ALERT AND BARRICADES WERE PUT UP TO KEEP DEMONSTRATORS AT DISTANCE FROM ASSEMBLY, AND LARGE NUMBERS OF POLICE WERE IN EVIDENCE, ALBEIT WITHOUT HELMETS AND OTHER RIOT GEAR WHICH MIGHT HAVE SERVED AS PROVOCATION. DEMONSTRATION TURNED OUT TO BE LARGELY SYMBOLIC -- ABOUT 6000 DEMONSTRATORS SHOWED UP, MOST BUSSED IN FROM MONTREAL, AND PARADED AROUND COMPLETELY PEACEFULLY FOR ABOUT HALF AN HOUR BEFORE GOING BACK HOME. THERE WERE NO INCIDENTS EXCEPT FOR A COLLISION BETWEEN TWO DEPARTING BUSES WHICH CAUSED SEVERAL INJURIES.

4. COMMENT: GOVERNMENT AND POLICE PERFORMED CREDITABLY IN AVOIDING UGLY INCIDENTS. PQ GOVERNMENT, WHICH INCLUDES A LARGE NUMBER OF FORMER LABOR ACTIVISTS AND MAKES NO BONES ABOUT ITS PRO-LABOR TILT, WANTED BADLY TO AVOID ANY EMBARRASSMENT AND WAS SUCCESSFUL. BOTH PRIME MINISTER LEVESQUE AND JUSTICE MINISTER BEDARD MADE IT CLEAR AHEAD UNCLASSIFIED

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OF TIME THAT THEY WOULD TOLERATE NO FURTHER DISRUPTIONS AND WERE PREPARED TO TAKE SEVERE MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COULD FUNCTION NORMALLY. THIS FIRMNESS, COMBINED WITH RELATIVELY POOR TURNOUT OF CIVIL SERVICE DEMONSTRATORS, APPEARS TO HAVE DRAWN THE TEETH OF CIVIL SERVICE UNION LEADERS. WHILE THERE WILL BE AMPLE OPPORTUNITY FOR FURTHER SHOWDOWNS BETWEEN LABOR AND GOVERNMENT LATER THIS YEAR AND NEXT SPRING AND THERE MAY IN FACT BE FURTHER CIVIL SERVICE DEMONSTRATIONS THIS WEEK, IT APPEARS TO US THAT ROUND ONE HAS GONE TO THE PQ ON POINTS. MCNAMARA

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